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AUTHOR	Sharp, Lanette
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ABSTRACT

Developed specifically for classroom teachers with a limited background in music, oral music lessons are designed to be taught in short, daily instruction segments to help students gain the most from music and transfer that knowledge to other parts of the curriculum. The lessons, a master degree project, were developed to support the Utah music core curriculum, and were created in a flexible format for teachers to use. They were taught within a 15 to 20 minute time frame each day for 30 days. A study was conducted in a rural (mixed with suburban) Utah elementary school in which a heterogeneous class of fourth-grade students (n=26) were taught the daily oral music lessons at the beginning of each day in a sequential manner. During each lesson a music element was reviewed and a new element was taught, building upon the skills taught the day before. A pretest of basic music elements/skills was given to all fourth graders, those who had received the oral lessons and those who received the regular music program. After the lessons were taught, a posttest was given to the students to determine if any growth took place. Group A (oral lessons) attained a 17% growth in knowledge of basic music skills, while Groups B and C ranged from 1% to 4% growth. Based on the findings and results of the tests and student and parental comments, the teacher-developed music lessons continue to be taught in the fourth grade. (Contains 18 references.) (BT)

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Classrooms and Curriculum Come Alive with Music: A Sequential Approach of Teaching Music to Elementary Students Using Daily Oral Music Lessons.

Lanette Sharp

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Lanette Sharp
2964 W. 4425 S.
Roy, Utah 84067
Weber School District
Lsharp@weber.kl2.ut.us

CLASSROOMS AND CURRICULUM COME ALIVE WITH MUSIC: A SEQUENTIAL APPROACH OF TEACHING MUSIC TO ELEMENTARY STUDENTS USING DAILY ORAL MUSIC LESSONS

INTRODUCTION

The need for a daily oral music program in the elementary classroom is an important as any other part of a student's daily curriculum. The 30 lessons that were developed in this handbook are written specifically for the classroom teacher who has a very limited background in the music skills as outlined in the Utah State Core Music Curriculum and the National Music Standards. The lessons were designed to be taught in short, daily instruction segments which would help students gain the most from music and transfer the knowledge that they have learned to other parts of the curriculum. A study was done as to the need for such lessons to be taught in the classroom with elementary students. The study showed significant improvements in the students that were taught the 30 lessons as part of their daily curriculum.

Through music, many of the other areas in the curriculum can be strengthened or reinforced. With simple lesson plans to follow which can excite and motivate student learning, the less knowledgeable teacher can feel successful. It is clear that music is an important part of a student's curriculum. Research proves that music plays an essential part in the imagining, creating, and developing of a child's thought processes. However, there is a lack of easy-to-use teacher music lessons available. With this in mind, the daily oral music lessons could be the start for all teachers to effectively teach basic music skills that will give each student a foundation on which growth can develop. The daily oral music lessons could be valuable for educators who believe and know that music plays a vital part in the lives of every student.

NATURE OF THE PROBLEM

Music has long been a universal language. It represents many cultures, the people, and the environment. Music has played a very important part in society throughout the history of mankind. Music can represent feelings, thoughts, emotions, and it has evoked deep cultural traditions and awareness throughout many countries. Music touches every human being from infancy to adulthood. The power of musical sound can be the vehicle of expression for a wide variety of emotions. Music not only moves individuals emotionally, but intellectually as well. It provides a way to imagine and create, and contributes to self-expression and creativity. It also provides for unique and distinct modes of learning and combines behaviors that promote higher order thinking skills. It can be a predictor of life's success and helps prepare students for a career. Music supports teaching discipline and commitment along the way. Plato once said, "Education in music is most sovereign because more than anything else rhythm and harmony find their way to the inmost soul and take strongest hold upon it bringing with them an imparting step if rightly trained."(Tacker, 1998, p. 62).

The value of music education in the public elementary schools is starting to gain attention in today's curriculum. Music education encourages team work and cohesiveness and definitely can provide success for some students who have difficulty with other aspects of the school curriculum. Music needs to be treated as equally important as the other academics that are taught in the classroom. Many times music is either put aside or is treated as an extra, a group time user or as a basic sing along or practice for a school program.

The State Board of Education through the Utah State Core Curriculum has mandated certain music standards to be taught at each grade level. The music core is quite complete and very sequential with the use of standards for teaching music concepts for each grade. However, lesson plans to teach these standards are not available to teachers. Often teachers must develop their own plans for teaching the music skills. The teacher who feels inadequate in music avoids teaching the skills and concentrates their efforts in academics where they feel more confident.

Sometimes the decision of what to teach during elementary music is decided by the district, or the principal. Some districts have very strict policies and provide music specialists that serve each elementary school on a weekly basis. Other districts have made music lesson plans and materials available for their teachers so that the music skills

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will be taught. Some schools have principals that feel strongly about the arts, and hire teachers with strong musical backgrounds to help teach the music skills in the classrooms.

Music education should be one of the core foundations in a curriculum. The music education that a child receives today should not be left to the whim of current popular styles. A child should have the opportunity to be exposed to the skills of which music is composed. These basic music skills can help a child conceptualize numbers and their spatial relationships and become literate for life. (Shaw,1996)

If teachers with a limited background in music were given easy lesson plans to teach, would music then receive its allotted time of ninety minutes in the curriculum? Could all public educators excite students and make them want to listen and produce all types of music if the basic music skills were adequately taught?

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

The classroom teacher's role in providing music instruction at the elementary level has varied considerably over the years, often times in response to major shifts in educational philosophy or practice. Prior to 1960, for example, "self-contained classrooms" and "student socialization 'were centerpieces of elementary education and classroom teachers were largely or even solely responsible for music teaching and learning. With the implementation of higher standards for subject-area achievement in the 1960's, music teaching responsibility shifted from classroom teachers, who typically are very limited in their knowledge about music or music teaching methods, to music specialists. Specialists were put in charge of developing sequential curricula and providing critical music instruction to children.

Music Specialists and Classroom Teachers

Currently, there is a movement to reexamine the elementary general music program, particularly with respect to the types of benefits that might arise from greater collaboration between music specialists and classroom teachers (Austin, 1991; Ballard, 1990). Ballard states, "the most practical and immediately feasible way of incorporating the arts into the daily curriculum is to involve the classroom teacher." (Ballard, 1990, p. 42). The reason for the rise in this movement comes from several related concerns.

First, despite professional advocacy efforts to increase the number of music specialists working in public schools, recent estimates indicate that 55% of the school districts in this country are not served by a full-time music specialist (Goodman, 1991). Ballard hypothesizes that music specialists, by their very existence, create the perception that music is not part of the elementary curricular core which, in turn, makes these positions and related programs difficult to protect in terms of a budgetary crisis. Where full-time positions for music specialists do exist in districts, many of these instructors float among several elementary schools. Instructors teach large student populations making learning the basic skills of music somewhat difficult (Ballard, 1990).

Secondly, there is a growing realization that while music specialists may be best qualified and equipped to teach for course content mastery or skill development, they are not necessarily in the best positions to influence student attitudes on a daily and individual basis (Austin, 1991). Classroom teachers, acting upon their own values and self-perceptions, may either reinforce or subvert the specialist's best efforts to promote music learning and lifelong involvement with music.

Third, there has been an emerging interest in holistic teaching and cross-curricular integration within the elementary school curriculum. These approaches in teaching, signal a need for greater cooperation between the classroom teacher and music specialist, rather than total reliance on either, in providing music instruction and related experiences to elementary school children (Ballard, 1990).

The aim of increasing classroom teachers' involvement in elementary music education poses some interesting challenges. Many classroom teachers have relinquished all responsibility for teaching music skills, using music class time for only group singing or listening time. Some teachers avoid music altogether. They use the time to teach and prepare the other core curriculum subjects that are considered more important in the core curriculum for the student. Several survey studies (Goodman, 1986; Krehbiel, 1990; Kritzmire, 1991; Price & Burnsed, 1989; Saunders & Baker, 1991) and a three-year ethnographic study (Bresler, 1993) of music instruction within the elementary school show that a majority of classroom teachers do not teach any music. Even in the lower primary grades, where teachers seem more comfortable with music, lessons teaching music skills are very sporadic. The lessons seem to serve as functions that are ancillary or antithetical to music learning. Many elementary school teachers cite heavy teaching loads and curricular pressures as reasons why they do not teach any music and can't seem to fit it into the daily schedule with other important core subjects (Bresler, 1993). Classroom teachers often rank the arts last in

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importance among subject areas they are expected to teach (Krehbiel, 1990). Perhaps a central reason why classroom teachers avoid teaching music is because they may harbor negative self-perceptions regarding their ability to make music or teach music effectively. (Bresler, 1993; Krehbiel, 1990; Saunders & Baker, 1991; %ite, in Price & Burnsed, 1989).

Music Importance in the Curriculum

Many school boards are currently posing the question of what can a child learn in a music lesson that is as important as a math lesson? Why should music skills be part of the daily curriculum during the early school years? Research has shown that music is a valuable source for mental, social, and emotional learning and should be taught as any other core subject for a child to develop and succeed in life (Madsen, 1981).

Shaw explains "that when children exercise cortical neurons by listening to classical music, they are also strengthening circuits used for mathematics. Music excites the inherent brain patterns and enhances their use in complex reason tasks." (Shaw, 1996, p. 57). The study of music theory is challenging and very mathematical and gives new ways to conceptualize numbers in math with which some elementary children struggle in the first years of education. The exploration of rhythm can help some students understand fractions. Research was conducted at McGill University in Canada, where students that listened to compositions by Mozart, Bach, or Beethoven, showed much improvement in general and spatial cognitive development (Shaw, 1996).

Music and Cognitive Development

Music is credited as being a foundation upon which skills will flourish and can be the gateway to knowledge. The power of music and its relevance to the subject of history can be seen in an instrumentation or mood of a piece of music.

A certain composer's work or song might communicate more clearly than words, the feeling of the era being studied. It can be used as an integral part of teaching certain events of our nation's history.

Broudy states, "There is an intimate connection between imagination, intellect, and music education." (Broudy, 1979) The value of music education is based on its relationship to the imagination and other functions of the mind. In teaching concepts, music creates an image, which in turn leads to understanding of the concept. Brain research shows that music activities develop intellect. The immature brain develops intellectual capacity when it participates in music activities. A music skills integrated curriculum leads the student to cognitive development (Sinatra, 1986). There are many research studies that show a connection between music education and reinforcement for academic tasks (Madsen, 198 1).

Benefits of Perfonrning Music

Students should be involved in performing the arts, which train the brain in aesthetic literacy. Such activities develop perceptual, imaginative, and visual abilities. Since the immature brain is dependent upon sensory stimulation for normal growth, curriculum must be motivational, exciting, and pleasure bearing in order to be retained by the immature brain. The immature brain develops intellectual capacity when a child participates in music activities. For example, music experience aids in developing language (Shaw, 1996).

Personal expression is encouraged through learning musical skills and performing. This develops flexible and fluent thinking abilities as well as the skill of close scrutiny and careful evaluation. Processes of thought in learning are characterized by a highly creative aspect. Music provides ways for aiding and increasing learning at various levels. Music experience builds confidence since they are activities which allow the student to become "in charge" to make decisions based on his/her own thoughts, insights, knowledge and judgments. (Oklahoma State Department of Education, 1980)

Music Enhancing Reading and Language Abilities

Pre-language auditory training can only be done through music. Discriminations between sounds, learned through listening to music, is required to achieve in spelling lessons. Eye-hand coordination needed to learn to write can be developed by learning to play an instrument (Wishey, 1980). Research also indicates that reading music can improve reading language abilities in slow young learners. The same skills are needed for reading words. Music has been shown to be such an effective component of reading instruction that teachers of reading are now being urged to become competent instructors of music in their reading classes (Tucker, 1981).

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As the literature clearly points out, it would seem very important to include music education along with the other 3-R's in the educational system. One without the other is truly a loss, and a disadvantage for the young and future leaders, inventors, men, and women in our society.

PURPOSE AND OBJECTIVES

The Utah State Core Music Curriculum lists basic skills and music knowledge for each grade level. All of the music skills in the State Music Core are sequentially built on one another throughout K-6th grade. Many classical composers and their compositions are also introduced to help demonstrate a music element or to provide historical knowledge about the music. Many of these skills are not always taught because of teachers' lack of knowledge in the music content, time constraint, or inadequate lessons.

The purpose of this Master's project was to enhance the State Core Music Curriculum for fourth grade by creating 30 daily oral music lessons. Four major areas have been addressed.

1. Music is a vital core subject in a child's curriculum. It is part of their environment and can strengthen and support the other subjects taught.
2. Elementary teachers of little or no music background can teach the lessons with success for student growth.
3. Daily oral music makes it possible for teachers to teach within the ninety minutes allotted for the teaching of music skills in the classroom.
4. The lessons were written to enhance the four basic standards of the State Core Music Curriculum, which are singing, listening, creating, and playing.

These lessons were taught within a fifteen to twenty minute time frame each day for 30 days. They were designed to help teachers more fully meet the State Core Music curriculum guidelines in the fourth grade. The lessons are flexible, concise, and easy for the teacher to use in teaching music successfully to their students.

METHODOLOGY: PROCEDURES

The elementary school in which the study was conducted, is in the western boundaries of a Utah school district. The school is located in a rural setting mixed with a small suburban community. The school building was designed to facilitate team teaching. Each grade has rooms that are organized in a three pod design. Each teacher has his/her own room with sliding curtains to open up and make it possible to team teach certain subjects during the day. One of the teachers in this setting was considered to be the music teacher with support from the other two teachers for classroom manageability during the music lessons. Most of the music was taught solely by one teacher. The other two teachers felt inadequate in the music field and lacked the expertise to teach music to the students in the fourth grade.

A heterogeneous class of twenty-six fourth grade students were taught the daily oral music lessons. There was very little cultural diversity among the students in the school and the socioeconomic background of most of the students was relatively the same.

For the development of daily oral music lessons, the State Core Music Standards were used and the written lessons were based on these standards. The lessons were taught at the beginning of each day. The lessons were taught in a sequential manner.

During each lesson a music element was reviewed and a new element was taught.
The lessons built upon the skills that were taught the day before.

The daily oral music lessons were organized to support the following Utah Music Component Core Standards-1510-1540 (See Appendix A for complete Est of standards). The materials to teach the standards for the daily oral music lessons were collected from various music books including the 1988 Silver-Burdett & Ginn Music series. The lessons were developed to teach rhythm, melody, notation, musical terminology, key feeling, composers, and musical instruments.

Evaluation for the daily oral music lessons were formulated by using the following methods.

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1. Students in the author's homeroom class were taught 30 daily oral music lessons for 30 consecutive days. The author of the daily music lessons was the music teacher for all three fourth grade classes. The author continued to teach music to all three fourth grade classes once each week for forty minutes.

2. All fourth grade students were given a teacher developed pretest to assess the students' knowledge of the basic music skills. The test consisted of twenty-six multiple-choice questions on the elements of music. Individual student percentages for the pretest were tabulated, graphed, and reported. (See Appendix Q)

3. After the daily music lessons were taught, a posttest was given to the students in the three fourth grade classes. The posttest was evaluated, and individual student percentages on the postlest were tabulated, graphed, and reported. The results were used to improve the quality, usability, and efficacy of the daily oral music lessons. (See Appendix Q

4. Results of the study, and the written daily music lessons will be shared with other districts' teachers and administrators at a future date.

5. A copy of the written daily music lesson plans is included in the appendixes of the final master's project document.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The purpose of this project was to create music lessons to assist the teacher with a limited music background, to successfully teach the basic essentials of music as part of the daily curriculum for a fourth grade student. The lessons, were designed to support the Utah Music Core Curriculum, and were created in a very flexible, easy, format for teachers to use in their curriculum.

A pretest of basic music elements/skills was given to all students in the fourth grade. Beginning in February 2001, one classroom of students were taught the 30 daily oral music lessons each day for 30 days. The other classes were taught the regular music program each week. After the lessons were taught, a posttest was given to all students in the fourth grade, to determine if any growth took place. Success of the project was judged by student improvement in Group A compared to the students in Group B and Group C who were taught the regular music program.

When the pretest was given it was even more revealing than the author had expected. Most of the fourth grade students had a very limited basic music skill knowledge, the only exception were those students who were taking private music lessons. The pretest scores of all the groups ranged from 15 to 88 percent showing that most of the students were considerably low in music skiffs. Only two or three students scored higher than the others. This could be attributed to the fact that they were taking music lessons. (See Appendix D)

After the pretests and posttests were given to all fourth grade students, the percentage of growth for both Groups B and C ranged from I to 4 percent while Group A attained 17 percent growth in knowledge of basic music skiffs through daily oral music lessons. (See Appendix D)

Success of this project was judged primarily by the student growth who were taught the music lessons compared to the other two groups that did not get the lessons in music. Many of the students who were taught the music lessons were excited to have music each day and some even requested learning more abou' music later in the day. Students in Group A became so involved in music that during recess time they would be out practicing rhythm chants while playing jump rope or playing basketball. Many students were disappointed when the author finished teaching the lessons and they wanted to continue on each day having music as part of their daily curriculum. It was great to see them so thrilled about music and how fun music can be in all areas of their fives. Many of the other fourth grade students who were not taught the lessons started becoming very interested in music by listening to the Group A students talk about how fun music can be. Many positive comments that were made by the students who were involved with the daily oral music lessons. They included: (a) "I like learning about music each day," (b) "Is it music time yet?" (c) "Music is fim and I like how we can do it with our math," (d) "I like learning about the composers, especially Mozart," (e) "Music basketball is cool, I know all kinds of notes now," (f) "I like making up rhythm patterns that we learned in music." (g) "I have learned a lot in music and like it."

From the beginning of teaching the music lessons, the students were interested but as the lessons progressed the motivation and interest increased. The students were very surprised how music can enhance their learning in some

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of the other areas of their curriculum, such as math and reading. The students couldn't believe that learning about music could be so much fun and they were excited to go home each day and ten their parents about the new music skills they were learning.

Positive feedback was also heard from the parents of the students who were being taught the music skills each day, and they stated that they would like to see more music lessons taught in the classroom by the future teachers of their children.

The fourth grade teachers of Groups B and C were also interested in the daily oral music lessons. One teacher stated, "I wished my students were taught the lessons, especially after watching the excitement that Group A exhibited after learning a new skill in music." "I would like to try and teach some of the lessons to my students as well." Another comment was made by the teacher of Group C who said, I think I could have some great success in teaching music with these lessons."

RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSIONS

Based on the findings and results of the music pre and posttest and student and parental comments, the author designed music lessons will continue to be taught in the fourth grade. Other teachers, especially the teachers of this author's grade have expressed a great interest in teaching the lessons. The teachers felt they could be successful teaching music with the daily oral music lessons because the format is specifically designed for the teacher with a limited musical background.

As author of the music lessons there are four areas of personal satisfaction and pleasure with the outcome of this project. They include: (a) knowing that there is a definite need for music skills to be taught in the classroom; (b) students were excited to learn about music and yearned for the opportunity to learn more; (c) knowing that teachers with a limited background in music can incorporate the lessons into their classroom; (d) and, positive feedback from parents stating the desire of more basic music skills to be taught in the classroom.

In conclusion, the need for teaching the basic music skills in the classroom is evident through the results and findings of this project. Through music, many of the other areas in the curriculum can be strengthen or reinforced. Music can be taught in a very simple fashion by teachers who feel inadequate in the content. With simple lesson plans to follow which can excite and motivate student learning the less knowledgeable teacher can feel successful. It is clear that music is an important part of a student's curriculum. However, there is a lack of easy-to-use teacher music lessons available. With this is mind, the daily oral music lessons could be the start for all teachers to effectively teach basic music skills to their students.

It is evident that students need more music instruction in their curriculum other than just singing time, and that they will enjoy learning about the different areas of music. The Utah Music Core Curriculum was created to be a part of the curriculum along with math, reading, science, etc. With daily oral music lessons, teachers can begin to teach the beginnings of basic music skills that give each child a foundation on which growth can develop.

With the growth that was seen in music by Group A in just a very short time, how would the growth of a student's music abilities be if they were taught everyday throughout the school year? It is something for teachers to consider when planning their daily curriculum.

As a result of this project the author will be sharing the daily oral music lessons with other district teachers. The author feels that the daily oral music lessons could be valuable for educators who believe and know that music plays a vital part in the lives of every student.

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